

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-24 and substitute in lieu thereof the following new claims:

25 (New). An apparatus comprising:

a network interface to link to a network;

a packet analyzer coupled to said interface to analyze a packet communicated to or from said network;

a characteristic analyzer to analyze a characteristic of packets sent to or from said network, and, based on that characteristic, assign a packet weight, such that different packets are counted differently depending on their weights; and

a device to count the weights of packets communicated to or from a network user.

26 (New). The apparatus of claim 25 including a device to determine a list of devices which communicated packets through said network interface.

27 (New). The apparatus of claim 25 including a weight definitions store coupled to said packet analyzer, to store weight values for different packet characteristics.

28 (New). The apparatus of claim 25 wherein said packet analyzer analyzes packet headers.

29 (New). The apparatus of claim 25 including a device to store a series of packet weights correlated to packet characteristics.

30 (New). The apparatus of claim 25 to assess a usage charge to a network user.

31 (New). A method comprising:

receiving a plurality of packets sent to or from a particular user;

assigning a weight to packets based on a characteristic of the packets; and

determining an accumulated weight based on the number of packets and the weights assigned to the packets.

32 (New). The method of claim 31 including using said accumulated weight to assess a usage charge.

33 (New). The method of claim 31 including analyzing packet headers to determine said characteristic.

34 (New). The method of claim 31 including storing a plurality of weights correlated to particular packet characteristics.

35 (New). The method of claim 31 including maintaining a list of devices originating or receiving packets.

36 (New). The method of claim 31 including dynamically updating weight definitions for different packet characteristics.

37 (New). The method of claim 31 including assigning a weight dependent at least in part on the time when the packet is received or transmitted.

R1.126 38
37 (New). The method of claim 31 including assigning a weight based on the packet's size.

39
38 (New). The method of claim 31 including providing a plurality of usage monitors for a network.

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39 (New). A network communications system comprising:
a plurality of network devices;
a plurality of metering devices, each metering device including a network interface,
a packet analyzer coupled to said interface to analyze a packet communicated to or from said

network, a characteristic analyzer to analyze the characteristic of packets sent to or from said network, and, based on that characteristic, assign a packet weight, such that different packets are counted differently depending on their weights, and a device to count the weights of packets communicated to or from a network user; and

a server coupled to the metering devices to assemble metering reports from the metering devices.

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~~40~~ (New). The system of claim 39 wherein the ratio of metering devices to network devices is in the range of 1:1 to 1:512.

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~~41~~ (New). The system of claim 39 including a device to determine a list of devices which communicated packets through said network interface.

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~~42~~ (New). The system of claim 39 including a weight definitions store coupled to said packet analyzer, to store weight values for different packet characteristics.

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~~43~~ (New). The system of claim 39 wherein said packet analyzer analyzes packet headers.

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~~44~~ (New). The system of claim 39 including a device to store a series of packet weights correlated to packet characteristics.

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~~45~~ (New). The system of claim 39 to assess a usage charge to a network user.